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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2014/1/Rev.1, annex II.

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Statement

There is considerable risk that the pursuit of individual interests, to the detriment of the common good, could endanger the gains of the Millennium Development Goals. To mitigate the impact of such a risk, the actions being undertaken, concerning young people in particular, must be accompanied by education in ethics, particularly individual ethics. Such education would enable young people to shape their personality and to build a society that satisfies their natural longing for peace and equity.

Individual ethics is the practical science of human conduct, the ultimate goal of which is to ensure that individuals can develop their true humanity. It allows them to apply the ethical principles that form the common basis of all moral and religious traditions to the different areas of their lives.

The first real task of education in ethics is to consider how the enduring principles that enable human beings to cultivate their moral aspirations can be adapted to the mentality and customs of our time.

Today, it is no longer possible to impose the standards of a traditional, authoritative moral discourse on young people. They have the capacity to understand the value and importance of ethics using rational and pragmatic methods, including through a deepening of the mechanisms that govern human nature and enable the development of human qualities; case studies; situation analyses; trial-and-error exercises, and observation of the causal relationships that separate the universal, objective conditions of development from those qualities that are truly human.

The pedagogical framework required for such education should emphasize open-mindedness, acceptance of others and their differences, exchange of experiences and the desire to achieve tangible results. It is in such a context — similar to that found in the experimental sciences — that young people can be encouraged to act ethically — in their dealings with others, in an informed manner, and over the long term — especially as they can see the benefits of such action on both themselves and their environment.

If such education were widespread, it would pave the way for solutions to such complex issues as:

- Solidarity among peoples, cultures and religions;
- Healthier operations and wiser decisions in all kinds of public or private organizations;
- Reconciliation of the legitimate right of all citizens to focus as a priority on their personal well-being and the development of their sense of the public good;
- Moral self-regulation, which allows individuals to strike a balance between their rights and their duties in an increasingly complex society;
- True tolerance of the fact that everyone should have freedom of thought, and the freedom to choose their beliefs and the meaning they want to give to their life.